

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 H-02 SCA-01 L-03 DHA-02 SSO-00

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FM AMCONSUL MAZATLAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 596

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS MAZATLAN 0046

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MX(CLOSE, JACK LAVERNE AKA WILLIAM H. FORD)

SUBJ: DEATH OF US PRISONER JACK LAVERNE CLOSE AKA WILLIAM
H. FORD

REF: A)STATE 27397; B) STATE 299469; C) MAZATLAN 41

1. POST AT PRESENT INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF CONFISCATION
OF BARRACAS AS REQUESTED IN REFTEL B. INVESTIGATION HAS BEEN
HAMPERED BY RECENT CHANGEOVER IN PRISON ADMINISTRATION (I.E.
APPOINTMENT OF NEW WARDEN) AND BY THE FACT THAT PRISON
AUTHORITIES DO NOT CONTROL SALE OF AND ADMINISTRATION OF
BARRACAS. SUCH CONTROL IS EXERCIZED BY A COMMISSION COMPOSED
OF PRISONERS.

2. THE CHIEF OF POLICE IN MAZATLAN VERBALLY REPORTED TO CONOFF
THE FACTS SURROUNDING THE ATTEMPTED ESCAPE. ACCORDING TO
POLICE CHIEF TWO GROUPS, ONE COMPOSED OF MEXICANS AND THE
OTHER COMPOSED OF AMERICANS (UNRELATEDLY EACH ATTEMPTED TO
ESCAPE FROM PRISON AT THE SAME TIME. WHEN THE BULLETS BEGAN
TO FLY, THE AMERICANS APPARENTLY LOST HEART AND RETURNED TO
THEIR BARRACAS. POLICE CHIEF STATED THAT HE HIMSELF HAD
BEEN THE FIRST TO ENTER CLOSE'S BARRACA BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN
TOLD THAT A SHOT HAD BEEN HEARD IN THERE. HE FOUND THE
CORPSE HANGING HALF ON AND HALF OFF OF CLOSE'S COT WITH
A 9 MM PISTOL UNDERNEATH BODY WHICH PISTOL HE ASSUMED BELONGED
TO THE DECEASED. HE STATED THAT THERE WAS A BULLET HOLE
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AND POWDER BURNS ON THE SKIN JUST BENEATH THE LEFT EAR.

HOLE APPEARED TO BE THE ENTRANCE POINT FOR THE BULLET. ON THE PATE OF THE HEAD SLIGHTLY TO THE RIGHT WAS ANOTHER HOLE THROUGH WHICH THE BULLET APPEARED TO HAVE EXITED. PARAFIN TESTS WERE CONDUCTED WITH POSITIVE RESULTS. THE CHIEF OF POLICE STATED THAT HE PERSONALLY IS CONVINCED THAT CLOSE COMMITTED SUICIDE. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ESCAPE ATTEMPT WAS FOILED BY GUARDS AND THAT CONSEQUENTLY NO PRISONER EVER ESCAPED FROM JAIL.

3. POST DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE ANY MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE ESCAPE ATTEMPT AND NO INDICATIONS OF MISTREATMENT AFTER ATTEMPT. FYI: OTHER AMERICANS INVOLVED IN ESCAPE ATTEMPT HAVE NOT BEEN PUNISHED BY AUTHORITIES ALSO CONOFF WAS SHOWN PHOTOS OF CORPSE AND NO MARKS ON BODY WERE APPARENT. THEREFORE POST DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT AN AUTOPSY IS REQUIRED.

4. COPY OF COMPLETE REPORT HAS BEEN PROMISED POST BY BOTH THE CHIEF OF POLICE AND THE STATE DISTRICT ATTORNEY. WHEN RECEIVED COPIES WILL BE FORWARDED TO BOTH DEPARTMENT AND AMEMBASSY.
PRIETO

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